



ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024

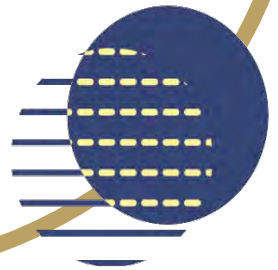


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240 Quay St, Rockhampton 4700

ABN 46 257 295 522

Vision

Empower the disadvantaged in our communities to navigate the Australian and Queensland legal systems through the provision of quality legal services utilising established and emerging service delivery methods.



Mission

Enhance and broaden access to legal services for the socially, economically or geographically disadvantaged throughout Central Queensland and the surrounding regions.

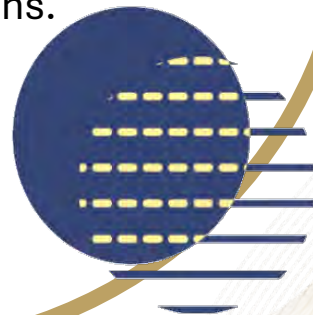


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



The Central Queensland Community Legal Centre Inc recognises that its operations are situated on country for which Aboriginal people have been custodians for many centuries.

In acknowledging this, the Centre pays its respects to the Elders, past, present and future, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the cultures and hopes of Indigenous Australia.

FUNDING SOURCE

Funding to operate the Centre was provided by the Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department and the Queensland Department of Justice and the Attorney General through the Community Legal Service program for the 2023/2024 financial year.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The 2023-24 year has been 12 months of steady growth for the Central Queensland Community Legal Centre Inc, the provider of legal advice to residents of Central and North West Queensland who have limited means.



The Legal Centre has delivered these services from operating offices in Rockhampton, Gladstone and Mt Isa, while providing outreach clinics for those living on the Capricorn Coast and in the Callide-Dawson valleys. Over the past 12 months CQCLC has made steady progress delivering these services to its wide variety of stakeholders.

The Gladstone office continues to be particularly busy handling a unrelenting workload in the Port City.

CQCLC continues to be an active member of Community Legal Centres Queensland which, among other initiatives, conducts an annual survey of Queensland CLC clients to determine the effectiveness of services provided by its members for the Department of Justice and Attorney General under the National Legal Assistance Partnership Agreement 2020-25.

As part of the 2024 survey, CLCQ asked legal centre clients 10 questions to determine comparative service effectiveness of its member centres. Once again CQCLC fared particularly well with its score for each of the questions noticeably above the average for all Queensland CLCs. This comparative data is a testament to the effective work provided by all involved in our Legal Centre.

Again, I would like to record my personal thanks, and the thanks of the Management Committee, to all staff and volunteers for their outstanding contributions to those who need to access the Legal Centre's services. Our role has become even more important following the explosion of domestic violence incidents throughout Australia.

The survey showed CQCLC's staff were knowledgeable and respectful, and assisted their clients understand how to deal with their legal challenges. Clients also had confidence Centre staff could help them now and in the future. The survey disclosed clients found it easy to locate CQCLC and they were prepared to recommend the Legal Centre to others requiring legal advice.

In addition to its regular monthly meetings, the Management Committee held a strategic planning day to identify our future challenges and possible solutions.

The Management Committee appointed Leith Seymour as the Mt Isa Indigenous Liaison Officer which has significantly improved the provision of advisory services to all our clients in North West Queensland.

Our work could not be completed without the commitment and energy of our dedicated and enthusiastic staff. I thank all for their hard work in delivering legal advice services. Our business has again been led by Business Manager Judy Wright and Principal Solicitor Fay Tzioutzias who have once more done a great job running our business. Thanks also to Kate Wright, Kelly Latham and Ross McLellan (Rockhampton), Jasmine Smith (Gladstone) and Rob Kendrick and Josh Gibson (Mt Isa) who have also done a great job helping their clients. The Centre is the sum of its individual parts and, without the ongoing contributions from all our staff and volunteers, the Centre would not have been in a position to surpass its survey targets.

I would also like to thank all our hard-working volunteers for their ongoing support and hard work. The Thursday night and specialist clinics in Rockhampton are integral parts of the Centre's offerings and would not be possible without the on-going, active support of the Rockhampton legal profession.

Finally, I would like to thank the Management Committee for all their time and support over the past 12 months. It's been a pleasure to once again chair the

Management Committee's monthly meetings. CQCLC is extremely fortunate to have such a committed and experienced team to look after its affairs.

Vice-President Damien Martin and Nikki Laver are not in a position to continue as Management Committee members in 2025. I would like to thank them both for their active and insightful contributions and wish them all the best for the future.

The Centre is excellently placed to continue its forward momentum providing legal advice to the residents of Central and North West Queensland, whose financial circumstances may exclude them from otherwise accessing such services. I wish all staff, volunteers and Management Committee members the very best for the future.

Rick Palmer
President, 2023 - 2024

Central Queensland Community Legal Centre

Management Committee 2023 - 2024

Damien Martin
Vice-President

John (Rick) Palmer
President

Justin French
Treasurer

Matthew Dunlop

Christopher Horton

Nikki Laver

Janice Moriarty

Luke Price

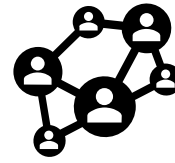
Gordon Stewart

OUR SERVICES - OVERALL



2275

The number of legal advices provided during the period.



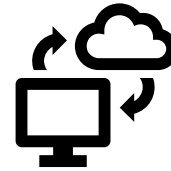
322

The Centre undertook 322 legal tasks including court documents and letters.



110

During this period we closed 110 cases.



956

We provided assistance through 956 information services.



1278

The Centre provided 1278 referrals.



1795

The Centre assisted 1795 clients, 1189 were new clients.

The figures presented on these pages provide an overview of 2023/2024 operations. They are relative to our service level agreements with the Commonwealth and State Governments. The figures for Duty Lawyer, COVID and EAPSS funds are reported separately.

Advices formed the major area of service with approximately 46% of advices undertaken by Rockhampton based staff, 26% in Gladstone, 8% in Emerald, 10% in Mount Isa and 10% by volunteers. 70.5% of clients who received legal advice as an assistance service were classified as experiencing financial difficulties.

Continuing the trends from previous years the top 3 areas of Legal Advice in 2023 – 2024 are shown below.

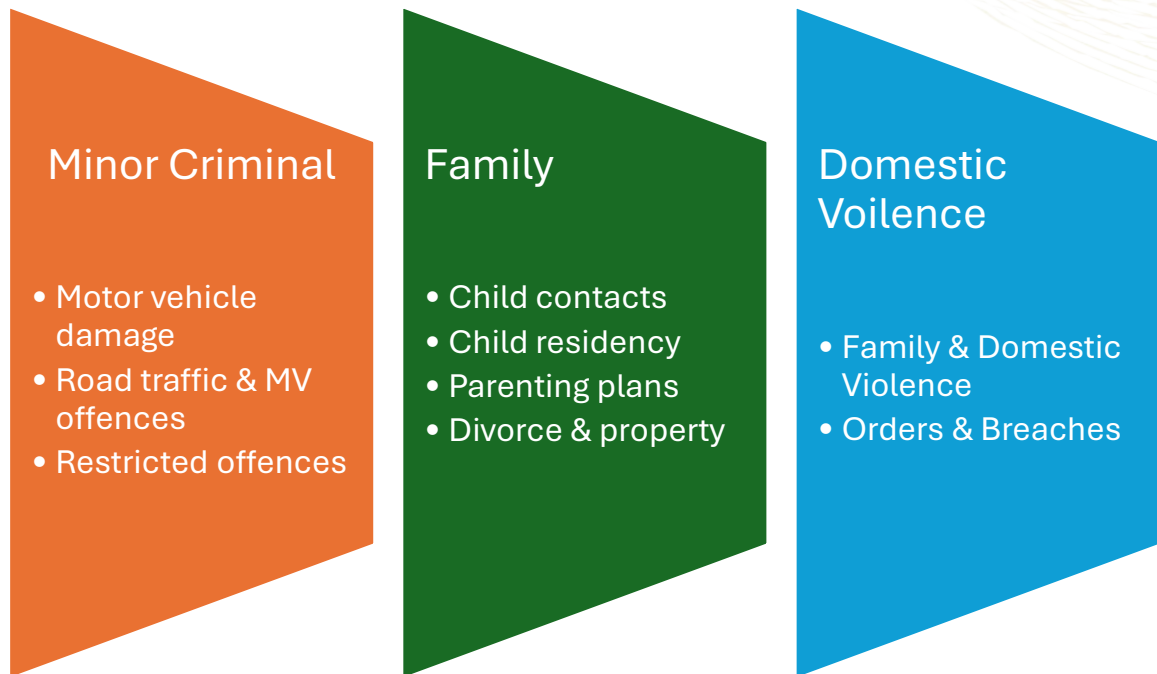
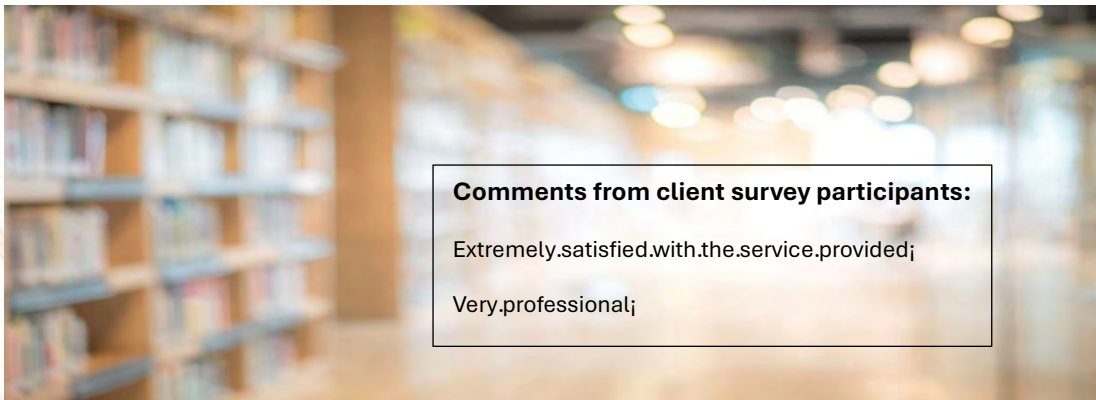


Figure 2. Top 3 areas of Legal Advice in 2023/2024

Whilst the Centre's main focus is on the provision of legal advice, some assistance through legal tasks and minor casework is provided to clients. Legal tasks are defined as assistance provided to complete forms, draft letters etc with no expectation of ongoing assistance. In 2023/2024 the Centre provided 322 types of assistance through undertaking tasks for clients.

Casework provides ongoing assistance to a client with the majority being within the family law area. In 2023/2024, casework (other representation) comprised of 62 carry forward cases with 126 cases opened and 110 closed during the reporting period.

All legal assistance figures contained in this report are based on reports from the CLASS data base.



CASE STUDIES

Client attended our office regarding a dispute concerning her enrolment with an education provider. She had enrolled in a “Disability Support Provider” course. Prior to enrolling in the course, she spoke with an enrolment officer and was assured that she would receive support and would find the course easy. Our client has poor literacy skills and for that reason, specifically sought out this information. As a result of receiving these assurances, our client proceeded with enrolling in the course.

Subsequently, our client experienced difficulty with the course. She had significant difficulties navigating the learning materials. Our client was also initially given incorrect log in details and as such was locked out of the course for the first few months.

The client then had a significant health concern. Our client made some initial payments to the education provider but then ceased paying. The education provider then started sending letters of demand to our client demanding payment of the balance of the course fee.

As such, we gathered reports from our client’s treating doctor as to her health concerns. We then corresponded with the education provider as to the misrepresentations made to our client at the time of enrolment and also these health concerns. We requested that our client’s enrolment be cancelled and that the balance outstanding be waived.

The education provider eventually confirmed that they would cancel the enrolment and not only waive the balance outstanding but they also refunded the monies already paid by our client, totalling approximately \$1200. As such, our client was extremely happy for the financial windfall and also relieved that she was no longer enrolled in the course.

A client presented to our service for advice as he was wanting to apply for a divorce. It is a requirement that a divorce application be personally served on the other party to the marriage. The difficulty was that the client had lost contact with his ex-Wife as they had been separated for many years. The solicitor gave advice to the client as to the appropriate inquiries and searches to undertake, including an electoral roll search, in order to ascertain the whereabouts of the ex-Wife.

As those inquiries did not assist, the Centre solicitor prepared the divorce application and also prepared an application to the Court seeking an Order that service of the application be dispensed with. The solicitor also prepared the required affidavit for the Court detailing the efforts made by the client to locate his ex-Wife. The client was successful in obtaining an Order to dispense with personal service of the application on his ex-Wife and the divorce was ultimately granted by the Court.

GENERAL OPERATIONS

The CQCLC (Centre) is a generalist legal service, providing continued support to the residents within the local government areas of Rockhampton, Livingstone, Gladstone, Banana and the Central Highlands. In August 2021, the Centre commenced the provision of legal assistance services in Mount Isa. These services aim to assist those who come from varying walks of life and cultures. Our clients present a broad range of issues within the areas of Family, Civil and minor Criminal law. The services provided include advice, tasks, casework, information, referral and education.

A centralised intake system provides clients with the option of a staff supported telephone or in-person booking together with the chat bot, based on the Centre website, for online bookings. Appointments can be either face to face, telephone or via video conference.

Office based appointments are available in Rockhampton Monday to Thursday between 9.30 am and 3.00 pm and Thursday evening from 5.30 pm to 7.30 pm. The Gladstone office offers appointments between Monday to Thursday each week. Mount Isa appointments are available Monday to Thursday. Appointment availability were augmented with outreach services in Yeppoon and Biloela.

During the reporting period, there was an even split of clients seeking face to face or telephone appointments, however telephone was the major form of communication when making an appointment.

Appointments for legal advice sessions are 30 minutes in duration, whilst the majority of advice sessions are “once off”, the provision of minor assistance through case and task work was provided to over 500 clients. Both new and repeat clients. Referrals are received from a wide range of areas including community groups, the Court House, Legal Aid, local practitioners and the Police Referrals System.

Outreach.Services

During the reporting period, the Centre maintained its outreach services to Yeppoon and Biloela together with the monthly Estates Administration clinic and the Rockhampton Thursday Evening Clinic.

Networking.™.Collaborations

Interagency meetings offer networking opportunities for the Centre. These meetings also provide opportunities for referrals and potential collaborations. Other regular meetings attended include the CQ Family Law Pathway Meeting, Domestic Violence Network Meeting and the Rockhampton Police Referrals Agencies Meeting. These meetings allow the Centre to provide and receive updates on available services.

Community.Legal.Education.and.Community.Engagement.Event

During 2023/2024 Community Legal Education events included in-person presentations and ABC radio presentations. The in-person presentations were held in Rockhampton, Yeppoon, and Gladstone.

The event topics included:

- Elder Abuse
- Wills and Powers of Attorney

CQUniversity.Law.Clinic

The Centre has been hosting CQUniversity students since 2015. In this reporting period, the students have undertaken several roles ranging from client intake, observing client interviews and providing support to staff.

The law students have 2 options for integrating their studies through participating at the centre. They have the option of undertaking the role of volunteer support officer which includes helping clients to identify the exact nature of their legal problem to maximise outcomes for the client or observing client interviews either in-person or via Zoom.

Feedback.on.services

The May 2024 client survey was managed state-wide through Community Legal Centres Queensland (CLC Qld) with the Centre ultimately reporting to the Department of Justice and the Attorney-General. The overall outcome of the survey highlighted that the CQCLC is continuing to provide a service that our clients are seeking and that the advice provided was helpful, staff and volunteers were friendly and knowledgeable and the assistance provided enabled the client to deal with their legal problems.

The survey incorporated a number of sub-questions which provided the foundation for benchmarking the CQCLC against the state average. Based on the benchmarking data, the CQCLC was ranked in the top quarter percentile by its clients for all sub-questions, achieving a mean (out of 4) of 3.7 and above.

Client satisfaction with the services provided was ranked highly by clients with 98.57% of the clients who participated agreeing that the CQCLC staff were knowledgeable and respectful and assisted the clients to understand how to deal with their legal problems. Further they had confidence in the staff to assist them now and in the future.

The survey has formed the basis for the CQCLC to review its services and focus on improving its processes to enhance its relationship with its clients.

The Graph below provides details of the sub-questions and clients responses.

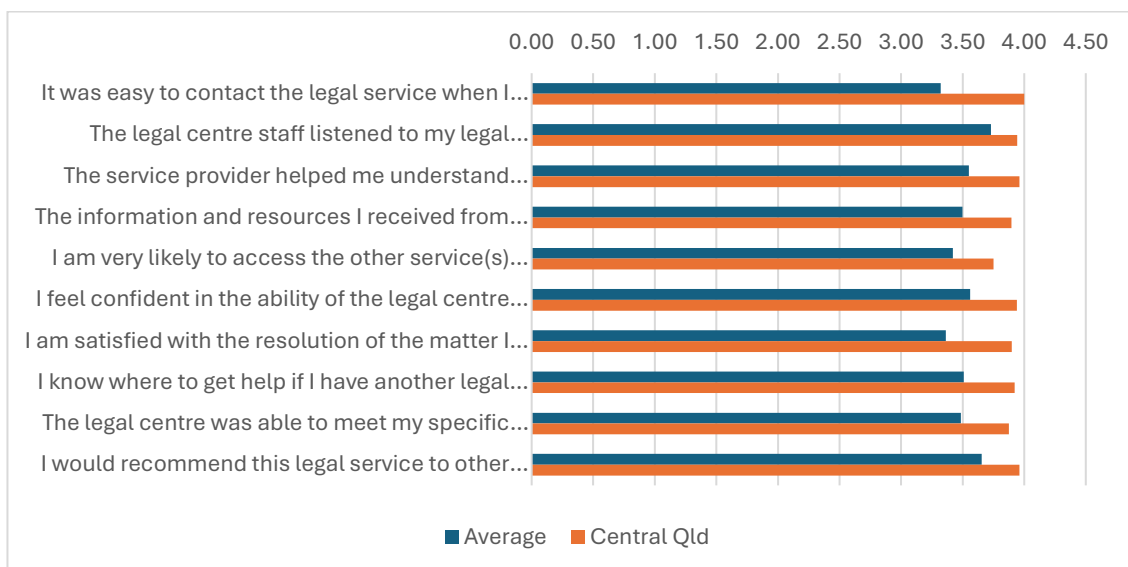


Figure.9j..CQCLC.responses.comparison.with.state.mean.(average);Data.provided.by.CLC.Qld.
 Extracted from the client survey report 2024, July 2024.

Elder.Abuse.Prevention.™.Support.Service

The Centre agreement with Relationships Australia for the provision of legal services for their Elder Abuse Prevention & Support Service in Rockhampton and Gladstone has been extended for an additional 12 months.

Duty.Lawyer

The Centre, under contract from Legal Aid, provides a staff member to act as duty lawyer in the Rockhampton (weekly) and Yeppoon and Gladstone (fortnightly) domestic violence court.

These services do not form part of targets embedded in the service level agreement however remuneration for the work is provided by Legal Aid. During the reporting period. Centre staff provided assistance to clients across the Rockhampton, Yeppoon and Gladstone regions.

Additionally, during the reporting period, the Centre has provided non-contracted assistance services at the Biloela, Mount Isa and Yeppoon DV Court.



Members of the CQCLC Management Committee 2023 - 2024

VOLUNTEERS

The contribution made by our volunteers is immeasurable as without their tireless efforts our ability to realise our vision would be difficult to achieve.

Support Officers

Our volunteer support officers, drawn from the community and law students have contributed over 1000 hours of voluntary work during the 2023/2024 period.

Thank you to:

Rockhampton – Olania Seeto-Toloi Viv Hoy Jack North Oscar Stock
Gladstone: Robyn Meintjes Paula Staples Vanessa Turnbull

PLT & Work Experience Students

During the reporting period, the Centre hosted a number of PLT and work experience students from Rockhampton secondary schools. The students ranged in year level however all were interested in studying law at the completion of their secondary studies.

Solicitors

The dedication and expertise brought to the Centre by volunteer solicitors drawn from the Queensland legal sector has been exceptional. It has enabled the Centre to realise its objectives through the weekly evening clinics. Over 200 hours of support has been provided enabling additional free legal advice sessions to be made available to the Central Queensland community. Grant & Simpson Lawyers have continued to volunteer with the provision of assistance for the Estates Administration Clinic.

Thank you to:

<i>Courtney Blamires</i> Bowes Law, Rockhampton	<i>Kristina Cummins</i> Robert Harris Rivett Lawyers, Yeppoon
<i>Grace de Vere</i> Rees R & Sydney Jones, Rockhampton	<i>Justin French</i> Taylor Rose, Rockhampton
<i>Damien Martin</i> Swanwick Murray Roche, Rockhampton	<i>Joshua Morgan</i> Kingdom Lawyers, Rockhampton
<i>John Siganto</i> Grant & Simpson, Rockhampton	<i>Michael Stockall</i> Michael Stockall Solicitor, Rockhampton
<i>Stephanie Smith</i> Brooke Winter Solicitors, Rockhampton	<i>Kimberly West</i> CQUniversity, Rockhampton
<i>Flora Wellington</i> My Will Qld, Rosedale	<i>Rafia Zaman</i> CQUniversity, Rockhampton

EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT:

Name: Mr Rick Palmer
Position: Director
Academic Qualifications: BA, LLB (Qld)
Current Employer: AgStreet Pty Ltd
Experience: Rick has worked as a solicitor, journalist, in higher education, tourism, event management and economic development. He's now working as a community relations consultant, principally for an international wind farm developer. He was appointed to the Management Committee in December 2017. After serving as president for two years, he was elected treasurer in 2021.

VICE PRESIDENT

Name: Mr Damien Martin
Position: Solicitor
Academic Qualifications: BA, LLB, GDLP
Current Employer: Swanwick Murray Roche, Rockhampton
Experience: Damien completed his undergraduate study at Griffith University and was admitted as a Solicitor in 2012. He has spent his career working in private practice across the areas of commercial, property, wills and estates and litigation. Damien joined the Committee in October 2020 and was elected as Vice President in October 2022. He also volunteers in the Centre's Evening Clinic.

TREASURER

Name: Mr Justin French
Position: Solicitor Academic Qualifications: JP (Qual), LLB, GDLP, GradCertMgmt, LLM
Current Employer: Taylor Rose, Rockhampton
Experience: Justin has worked as a solicitor and as an academic. He has spent his career in both in-house counsel and community legal roles and currently works in private practice with a particular interest in employment and family law. Justin has been a volunteer, an employee, and a committee member with the Centre at various points since July 2015.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Management Committee met regularly throughout the reporting period. The major areas of business included a review of the Rules of the Association (ongoing) and the review of the Centre's name.

At the 2023 Annual General Meeting, 7 of the 9 Committee members sought re-election with one new member and one returning member being appointed.

Management Committee

President:	Rick Palmer, AgStreet Pty Ltd, Rockhampton
Vice President:	Damien Martin, Swanwick, Murray & Roche, Rockhampton
Treasurer:	Nicole Laver, Rockhampton (30/10/2023 to 28/03/2024) Justin French, Rockhampton (28/03/2024 to 29/10/2024)
Committee Members:	Matthew Dunlop, Rees R & Sydney Jones, Rockhampton Justin French, Rockhampton (30/10/2023 to 28/03/2024) Christopher Horton, Rockhampton Nicole Laver, Rockhampton (28/03/2024 to 29/10/2024) Janice Moriarity, Project Mgr, Business Dev, ENC, Emerald Luke Price, CQUniversity, Melbourne Gordon Stewart, Rockhampton
Secretary:	Judith Wright, CQCLC, Rockhampton

I appreciated this service so much especially for people on a low income. The lawyer was caring and explained things in a way that I could understand.



CENTRE STAFF

During 2023/2024, no additional positions were created with the backfill of the Mount Isa the only new appointment made.

Legal Team

Principal Solicitor/CEO	Fay Tzioutzias	Ongoing
Solicitors:	Kate Wright	Ongoing
	Jasmine Smith	Ongoing
	Kelly Latham	Ongoing
	Ross McLellan	Ongoing
	Rob Kendrick	Appt. March 2023 Resigned May 2024
	Ross McLellan	Appt. Sept. 2021
	Josh Gibson	Appt June 2024

Administrative Team

Business Manager:	Judith Wright	Ongoing
Legal Support/Admin Officer:	Ruth Siganto	Ongoing
	Sue Woodfield	Ongoing
	Amy Wilks	Ongoing
	Lyndall Anderson	Ongoing
	Roslyn Heness	Appt. June 2023 Resigned May 2024

Support Officers

Social Worker	Kathleen Garle	Ongoing
Indigenous Liaison Officer	Leith Seymour	Ongoing

OUR HISTORY

Responding to public demands the Central Queensland Community Legal Centre was established in late 1995 and the Centre was granted incorporation status under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 on the 22 February 1996. With funding received from the Commonwealth Government, the Centre, in its first year of operations, assisted 722 clients.

The footprint of the Centre was from Mackay to Gladstone and west to Emerald. Since the inception of the Centre there has been changes to its footprint and office co-location however after 26 years the Centre today services an area from Rockhampton to Gladstone, and west to the Mount Isa region.

From 1996 to today the Centre has assisted over 29,280 clients and provided in excess of 54,880 advices in the Central Queensland and Mount Isa regions through the provision of legal support services. Statistically the profile of today's client is similar to 1996, that is, the majority are female, aged between 35 - 49 years and have nil to low income.

The Centre's focus has been and continues to be on the provision of a generalist legal service for a wide range of clients. The main services provided include legal advice, legal task and minor casework. The diversity of its demographic area has seen the growth of outreach centres to include residents in rural, remote and regional areas who now have enhanced access to free legal support services.

Our services target those whose financial circumstances would otherwise exclude them from accessing legal support and for those from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, translation services ensure that these communities are supported.

Community Legal Education activities are undertaken to increase awareness and understanding of various areas of law which sequentially assists in circumventing legal disputes arising.

The Centre registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission in 2012. Through its Memorandum of Understanding with CQUniversity, the Centre established a teaching centre which provides access to work experience and placement opportunities for law students.



OUR LOCATIONS



ROCKHAMPTON

240 Quay St

Rockhampton 4700

Phone: 1800 155 121



GLADSTONE

147 Goondoon St

GLADSTONE 4680



MOUNT ISA

Suite 28

119 Camooweal St

MOUNT ISA 4825

Phone: 1800 571 206